

# A Changing Community

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### *A Brief History*

In 1865, a man named Zachariah Sales and his family decided to end their journey from Ontario, Canada and homestead on a scenic spot next to the Gallatin River in Montana territory. Mr. Sales started a sawmill on his homestead. He and his fellow homesteaders were successful enough to need a name for this little burg and decided on Slab town. The little area of Slab town flourished during those years and they built a church, school, post office, blacksmith shop and a few Saloons. On July 13, 1883, Slab town honored Mr. Zachariah Sales by renaming the little town Salesville and filing an official plat of the town with the Montana Territorial capital in Helena.

The years following 1883 saw much activity in and around the area of Salesville. Area residents of the day made a living from farming, ranching, logging and developing the land. In 1885 the property on the corner of Bozeman St. and Adams St. was donated to build a church which later led to the creation of the Ladies Aid in 1912, now known as the Willing Workers Ladies Aid, Inc. (WWLA).

Change and growth were in the cards for the little area of Salesville with the launching of new businesses like a livery stable and Mercantile built in 1906, along with a grocery store and later a gas station. A novelty store on the east side of Salesville, complete with a dance hall upstairs, gave proof to the adage, “build and they will come” because Salesville continued to grow and change. The Salesville State Bank was built in 1910. The growth also brought more children, and the Gallatin Gateway school was constructed in 1914. The school continued to grow and expand with additions in 1961, 1966, 1978 and 1989, with the latest addition in 2005.

The needs of the surrounding area were not the only growth influencing Salesville. In 1906 the Gallatin Valley Railway Company began construction of a track from Salesville to Bozeman, and by 1908 the Inter Urban Electric car had completed its first trip. In 1927 the Milwaukee built a spur line from Three Forks to carry travelers to Yellowstone National Park.

The Gallatin Gateway Inn was built to serve and refresh these travelers. Constructed in only four months, a grand opening held June 17, 1927 for the 42,000 square Colonial Spanish-style building attracted 23,000 people. Although tourism increased, the railroads suffered financially as highway travel improved and the Inn fell into disrepair. After extensive restoration, the Gallatin Gateway Inn is once again a gracious, full service hotel, offering superb dining, conferences, weddings, swimming, fishing with superb accommodations for today’s traveler. The popularity created by the Milwaukee Railroad of Salesville as the “Gateway” to Yellowstone Park lead to Salesville becoming known by what we call it today, Gallatin Gateway.

The community has long had a history of service and involvement. WWLA, inc., a community service organization, has operated continuously since its origin in 1912. Its mission is to assist those in need and to promote unity and goodwill.

Incorporated by the State of Montana in 1992, WWLA, Inc. has federal and state non-profit, tax-exempt status. To achieve its goal of establishing a permanent community center, land at 145 Mill Street was purchased from Lumber Enterprises, Inc. in 1990. Grants and fund-raising activities provided money for construction. Designed by a local architect, constructed by volunteers, and completed in 1995, the Gallatin Gateway Community Center is the site for community meetings, school events, social activities, and a polling place for elections. Rentals, donations, and fund-raisers finance maintenance and operations. WWLA, Inc. conducts charitable work throughout the year and awards scholarships to Gallatin Gateway youth.

Over the last several decades, the Gallatin Gateway area has continued to grow and change. As the Big Sky Ski Resort has expanded, the amount of traffic traveling through the community has increased. As residents have moved to the area, school enrollment has steadily swelled. Businesses have been founded, and existing businesses expanded. The Fire Department has seen a growing demand for emergency services. Change has been happening to Gallatin Gateway for over 100 years, and examining the community within the context of the greater Gallatin Valley shows that change can be expected to continue for some time to come.

### *What's Next?*

This is the first community plan for Gallatin Gateway. Over the last several months, residents have expressed a desire to use the planning process to preserve the rural nature of the area, direct growth into the core of downtown Gallatin Gateway, preserve the river and other water resources, explore the possible formation of a water and sewer district, and have a serious discussion about zoning to mitigate potentially incompatible uses.

Several of these discussions have been controversial, and it remains to be seen how successful they will be. This plan represents a new approach to growth in Gallatin Gateway. It attempts to balance the rights of individuals with the desire of the community to allow growth that doesn't infringe on the rights of existing neighbors, and to encourage a better school and emergency services, improve traffic controls on highway 191, and preserve the open space and rural atmosphere that so many people love. Before detailing policies to implement this vision, however, the remainder of this chapter deals with compliance with state statute, the county growth policy, and describes the process leading to this plan's adoption.

### *The Planning Process*

The planning process for the Gateway Community Plan formally began in February of 2007. The process has been coordinated by the Gateway Community Planners, a steering committee of volunteers who have partnered with Gallatin County to guide the process. The steering committee has met twice a month at the Gallatin Gateway Community Center and has hosted several community events to present information and gather feedback. The steering committee has also solicited information and feedback from several agencies and professionals,

including the Montana Department of Transportation, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Gallatin Gateway School Board, the Gallatin Gateway Fire Department, the Gallatin City/County Environmental Health Department, and several consulting engineers. This Plan is a result of that conversation.

The following events have been held over the course of the last year:

- March 2007: Survey mailed to 650 landowners announcing the beginning of the planning process and asking initial questions (120 returned);
- May 18, 2007: Held a kickoff meeting to formally begin the process and establish general direction (70 community members participating);
- August 15, 2007: Meeting held to focused on historic downtown (40 community members participating);
- October 17, 2007: Meeting held to receive feedback on the initial direction of the planning process (87 community members participating)
- November 7, 2007: Meeting held to discuss sewer and water district formations and zoning regulations;
- January 25, 2008: Meeting held with large landowners to discuss policy options;
- January 30, 2008: Meeting held to discuss policy for rural Gallatin Gateway (67 community members participating);
- March 13, 2008: Meeting held with large landowners to discuss policy options;
- March 13, 2008: Meeting held to discuss policy for the downtown core (55 community members participating);
- April 30, 2008: Meeting held to discuss goals and policies of the Highway 191 corridor.
- June 4, 2008: Presentation of the first draft of the Gallatin Gateway Community Plan.
- October 8, 2008: Presentation of the final draft of the Gallatin Gateway Community Plan

## *Authority*

This plan will be adopted as the Gallatin Gateway Community Plan Chapter of the Gallatin County Growth Policy. Authority of this community plan is authorized by Montana State Statute and the Gallatin County Growth Policy. Section 76-1-106 of the Montana Code Annotated (MCA) requires local planning boards to prepare growth policies, and Section 76-1-601 offers general guidance for the contents of a growth policy and/or neighborhood plan. Sections 76-1-602 through 76-1-604 give the procedure for adoption of growth policy or growth policy amendment.

Additionally, Chapter 4.3 of the Gallatin County Growth Policy authorizes the development of Neighborhood, or Community, Plans throughout Gallatin County. Those community plans must be drafted in compliance with the County Growth Policy, and are designed to give greater specificity within a certain defined area.

## *Organization of the Plan*

This plan contains three layers of guidance for residents and decision makers:

- The overall vision and guiding principles presented below, which set the stage for more specific direction that follows;
- Goal statements in each chapter, which are broad statements about how the community will address a particular issue or need;
- Policies, which are specific action statements about how the community will achieve each goal.

The plan calls for exploring three primary strategies for managing growth in the Gallatin Gateway area:

- **Partnerships.** Partnerships, or agreements, between two agencies are a primary strategy communities can use to implement their planning policies. A primary strategy to implement plan policies in Gallatin Gateway are is a partnership between Gallatin County and the Montana Department of Transportation.
- **Investments.** A second strategy to implement the Gallatin Gateway Community Plan policies involve investments. Investments require the residents of Gallatin Gateway, the County, or perhaps outside agencies (such as MDT or federal grant programs) to invest time, energy, money, or a combination thereof. Investments include exploring the option of public water and sewer for downtown Gateway.
- **Requirements.** Requirements can take several different forms. The most common type of requirement is a set of development standards which new development or changes in land use would have to meet (also known as zoning). These standards could include setbacks from canals or ditches, landscape buffers between commercial and residential uses to help compatibility, lighting standards for new commercial buildings, density requirements for new subdivisions, requirements for central sewer/water, etc. Other types of requirements could take the form of plan policy. Examples include planned road connections, trail connections, or sidewalk connections which new development would have to build as a condition of their approval.

The plan is divided into three geographic areas: the Town Core, Rural Gallatin Gateway, and the Highway 191 corridor. Partnerships, investments, and strategies are all discussed as implementation strategies for achieving the goals and policies of each geographic area.